

te testing experience

The Magazine for Professional Testers

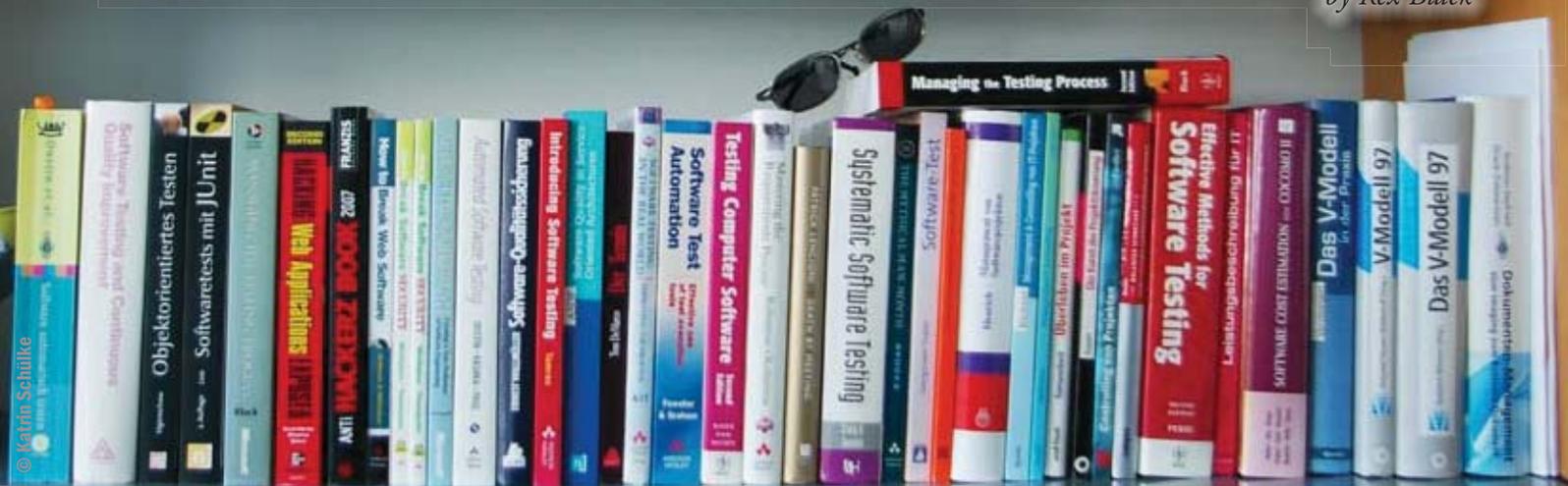
Test Techniques in practice -

Do they help?

Why do we often test without them?

Two Weeks to Better Testing this Summer

by Rex Black



Many of us will spend this summer relaxing, which is always good. However, why not invest a little of your vacation time in improving your testing operation. After all, if you're like most testers, you are time constrained and need to make improvements quickly that show fast results. So here are three practical ideas which you can put into action in just two weeks, which will make a noticeable difference when you tackle that next big, post-summer project.

Get Hip to Risk-Based Testing

I have a simple rule of thumb for test execution: Find the scary stuff first. How do we do this? Make smart guesses about where high-impact bugs are likely. How do we do that? Risk-based testing.

In a nutshell, risk-based testing consists of the following:

1. Identify specific risks to system quality.
2. Assess and assign the level of risk for each risk, based on likelihood (technical considerations) and impact (business considerations).
3. Allocate test effort and prioritize (sequence) test execution based on risk.
4. Revise the risk analysis at regular intervals in the project, including after testing the first build.

You can make this process as formal or as informal as necessary. We have helped clients get started doing risk-based testing in as little as one day, though one week is more typical. For more ideas on how, see my article, "Quality Risk Analysis," in the Library at www.rbc-us.com, or my books *Managing the Testing Process* (for the test management perspective) or *Pragmatic Software Testing* (for the test analyst perspective).

Whip Those Bug Reports into Shape

One of the major deliverables for us as testers is the bug report. But, like Rodney Dangerfield, the bug report gets "no respect" in too many organizations. Just because we write them all the time doesn't mean they aren't

critical—quite the contrary—and it doesn't mean we know how to write them well. Most test groups have opportunities to improve their bug reporting process.

When RBCS does test assessments for clients, we always look at the quality of the bug reports. We focus on three questions:

1. What is the percentage of rejected bug reports?
2. What is the percentage of duplicate bug reports?
3. Do all project stakeholder groups feel they are getting the information they need from the bug reports?

If the answer to questions one or two is, "More than 5%," we do further analysis as to why. (Hint: This isn't always a matter of tester competence, so don't assume it is.) If the answer to question three is, "No," then we spend time figuring out which project stakeholders are being overlooked or underserved. Recommendations in our assessment reports will include ways to get these measures where they ought to be. Asking the stakeholders what they need from the bug reports is a great way to start—and to improve your relationships with your coworkers, too.

Read a Book on Testing

Most practicing testers have never read a book on testing. This is regrettable. We have a lot we can learn from each other in this field, but we have to reach out to gain that knowledge.

(Lest you consider this suggestion self-serving, let me point out that writing technical books yields meager book royalties. In fact, on an hourly basis it's more lucrative to work bagging groceries at a supermarket. Other benefits, including the opportunity to improve our field, are what motivate most of us.)

There are many good books on testing out there now. Here's a small selection, any one of which you could work your way through during a beach vacation.

I have read each of these books (some of which I also wrote or co-wrote). I can promise you that, if you need to learn about the topic in the left column of the table, reading one of the books in the right column will repay you in hours and hours saved over the years, as well as teaching you at least one or two good ideas you can put in place immediately.

What You Want	Books to Read
General tips and techniques for test engineers	<i>Pragmatic Software Testing</i> , Rex Black <i>A Practitioner's Guide to Software Test Design</i> , Lee Copeland
Object-oriented testing	<i>Testing Object-Oriented Systems</i> , Robert Binder
Web testing	<i>The Web Testing Handbook</i> , Steve Splaine
Security testing	<i>Testing Web Security</i> , Steve Splaine <i>How to Break Software Security</i> , James Whittaker
Dynamic test strategies and techniques	<i>T-Map Next</i> , Tim Koomen et al <i>How to Break Software</i> , James Whittaker
Test management	<i>Managing the Testing Process</i> , Rex Black <i>Systematic Software Testing</i> , Rick Craig
Test process assessment and improvement	<i>Critical Testing Processes</i> , Rex Black <i>Test Process Improvement</i> , Martin Pol et al
ISTQB tester certification	<i>Foundations of Software Testing</i> , Rex Black et al <i>The Testing Practitioner</i> , ed. Erik van Veenendaal



Biography

With a quarter-century of software and systems engineering experience, Rex Black is President of RBCS (www.rbc-us.com), a leader in software, hardware, and systems testing. For over a dozen years, RBCS has delivered services in consulting, outsourcing and training for software and hardware testing. RBCS clients save time and money through improved product development, decreased tech support calls, improved corporate reputation and more. As the leader of RBCS, Rex is the most prolific author practicing in the field of software testing today, having written four popular books, with two new books (and a new edition of *Managing the Testing Process*) on the way. Rex is the President of the International Software Testing Qualifications Board and a Director of the American Software Testing Qualifications Board.

Testing is a skill.

While this may come as a surprise to some people, it is a simple fact.

Fewster, Graham: "Software Test Automation"

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